TALES OF HAIDAR ALI OF MYSORE.

Fourteen popular Tales.

BY

C. HAYAVADANA RAO B.A., B.L.,

Fellow of the Royal Anthropological Institute (London).

ANNAS FOUR ONLY.

MADRAS:

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PREFACE.

Haidar Ali of Mysore is a familiar figure to every student of Indian History. The story of his life is well-known and needs no repetition here. Though over a hundred and twenty years have elapsed since his death, he is yet a popular personage in all Southern India. There are several tales told of him everywhere in Mysore and the adjoining British districts and of these only a few select ones are included in the present collection. These give a more vivid picture of the great soldier of fortune than pages of written history can. This is, of course, the utility of all folk-tales told of great personages. Though no particular order has been observed in the arrangement of the tales, it will be seen easily that they include those relating to his bringing up, rise, conquests, religious toleration and death. Of these, two have been published in one form or another in the *Madras Review* and a few others have been selected from the works of contemporary writers. I have no doubt people will be interested in reading these tales of one of India's greatest military heroes.

C. HAYAVADANA RAO.

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I

HAIDAR AND BHAGAMMA.

Haidar was, as a boy, a servant in the house of a Brahman lady of the name of Bhagamma who is still remembered at Devanhalli in the Mysore State. He looked after the children of the household and was in return sumptuously fed by Bhagamma. The lady was particularly fond of the young Moslem boy who, it would appear, spoke faultless Kanarese. "Haidar, Haidar, my boy, where hast thou gone at the meal time" she would cry out if he absented himself at the dinner hour. Haidar was equally responsive to the charitable lady's kind heart. When he grew to be a great and prosperous man he did not forget the kindness shown him by Bhagamma.

During the height of his glory after the usurpation of the Mysore throne in 1761, he once visited the old lady in her own house at Devanhalli. Seated on the State elephant and with bags of gold and silver and jewels laden on elephants, camels and

horses and accompained by a huge retinue of followers, he arrived at Bhagamma's house and getting down his elephant went up to the door and heavily knocked at it. "Who is there ?" cried out the lady as she approached the doorway. "Myself, thy servant boy, Haidar, Haidar, thy well-beloved Haidar." The old lady could scarce believe what she heard and with trepidation opened the door and stood right in front of her old child-bearer, now virtually the sovereign of Mysore. Tears of joy flowed out of her eyes as Haidar, to the amazement of his followers, fell at her feet and emptied the bags of jewellery and gold and silver in her house, saying "To thee, mother, and to thy hand-fuls of rice, I owe my present position and to thee I return my debt." The lady badly overcome wept for very joy and blessed long life and prosperity to her quondam-servant, who took due leave of her before he departed.

II

HAIDAR AND AYAZ.

Haidar, in his first expedition against Malabar, took captive a young Nayar of Chirakkal, whom he turned a slave of his palace His noble deportment and singular beauty made an impression on Haidar, who when he grew to manhood's estate designated him "his right hand in the hour of danger." After the capture of Chitaldrug, Haidar nominated him Governor of that place. Ayaz modestly declined the honour as one to which he felt himself incompetent, and particularly objected that he could neither read nor write, and was consequently incapable of a civil charge. "Keep a corla at your right hand" said Haidar, "and that will do you better service than pen and ink" ; then assuming a graver countenance ; "place reliance" added he "on your excellent understanding! act from yourself alone! fear nothing from the calumnies of the scribblers! but trust in me as I trust in you! reading and writing!! how have I risen to Empire without the knowledge of either."*

* Corla is an instrument of personal chastisement.

III

HAIDAR AND SCHWARTZ.

In the year 1779, Sir Thomas Rumbold, then Governor of Madras was afraid that Haidar Ali took umbrage at the acts of the Madras Government and wanted to wage war with it. He sent word to the Rev. Schwartz, the well-known German Missionary resident at Tanjore, and commissioned him to go to Haidar and assure him that the Madras Government had no other but thoughts of peace. Since the mission was to preserve the blessings of peace and did not in any manner militate against his charcter as Christian Missionary, Schwartz consented to the proposal on the condition that the Government was not to press any presents on him except his bare travelling expenses.

After nearly a month and a half Schwartz reached Seringapatam, the capital seat of Haidar. He had his tent pitched for him on the fort glacis there being an epedimic of fever at the time within the town

"When I came to Haidar," narrates Schwartz, "he desired me to sit down alongside of him. The floor was covered with the most exquisite tapestry. He received me most politely, listened friendly and with seeming pleasure to all what I had to say; he spoke very openly and without reserve, and said that the Europeans had broken their solemn engagements and promises but that nevertheless he was willing to live in peace with them, provided *** At last he directed a letter to be wrote, had it read unto me, and said, what I have spoken with you, that I have shortly mentioned in the letter. You will explain the whole more at length."

On the day of his departure from Seringapatam, Schwartz visited Haidar to bid farewell to him. "You may perhaps wonder," said he in explaining the motives of his journey, "what could have induced me, a priest, who has nothing to do with political concerns to come to you, and that on an errand which does not properly belong to my sacerdotal functions. But, as

I was plainly told, that the sole object of my journey was the preservation and confirmation of peace; and having witnessed more than once, the misery and horrors attending on war, I thought within my own mind, how happy I should deem myself, if I could be of service in cementing a durable friendship between the two Governments; and thus securing the blessing of peace to this devoted country and its inhabitants. This I considered as a commission in no wise derogatory to the office of a Minister of God, who is a God of peace." Haidar said with great cordiality: "Very well! Very well! I am of the same opinion with you; and wish that the English may be as studious of peace as you are. If they offer me the hand of peace and concord I shall not withdraw mine."

Schwartz then took leave of him. On reaching his palanquin he found that Haidar had sent three hundred rupees to defray his travelling expenses. The reverend missionary wished to decline the present; but he was told by Haidar's

people that it would endanger their lives if they dared to take it back. He then wished to return it in person; but he was told by one of the ministers, that it was contrary to etiquette to re-admit him into Haidar's presence, since he had his audience of leave; or to receive his written representation on the subject. Schwartz was, further told, that knowing a great present would offend him, Haidar had purposely confined it only to the lowest amount of travelling expenses. He had nothing left to him accordingly but to take in the money. He, however, produced it before the Government of Madras, which disired him to keep it. In recognition of his valuable services he was further appointed Honorable Company's Chaplain to the English Garrison at Tanjore on a salary of one hundred pounds sterling.*

* Abstracted from Rev. Schwartzs letters to one of His Majesty's Chaplains in 1779 and 1780.

IV

HAIDAR AND HIS SOVEREIGNTY.

Haidar occasionally took a nap during the day in his tent after unusually fatiguing work done in the morning. A friend who was frequently in his tent on one occasion observed him to start, and be much disturbed in his sleep. On Haidar's waking up, the friend mentioned what he had observed and asked of what he had been dreaming. "My friend" replied Haidar, "the state of a Yogi is more delightful than my envied monarchy; awake they see no conspirators; asleep they dream of no assassins."

V

HAIDAR AND TIPU SULTAN'S TEACHER

Haidar, it is said, knew not how to sign his name ; indeed, he could neither write nor read. But he had a great regard for learning as an aid to the acquisition of the art of Government. So, he decided on giving a sound education to his son Tipu. He accordingly placed him under an able and learned Maulvie to be properly educated.

Several years elapsed before Haidar again turned his attention to the subject of his son's education. Distracted by the diverse troubles weighing heavily on him, he forgot the affairal together. One day, while at Seringapatam,he ordered the Maulvie and the boy to his presence. They came and Haidar set to examine the boy in the teacher's presence. The boy had become an adept in religion and had imbibed thorough-

ly the fanatic Muhammadan spirit. "You villain! you have wrecked my boy. You have taught him naught about conquests and ruling but have made him an odious religious fanatic under whom the country is sure to go to pieces. Begone for ever from my presence." In his great rage, Haidar summarily ordered that the man should be executed without a moment's delay for the mischief he had wrought.

VI

HAIDAR AND TIPU.

Haidar, from the earliest youth of Tipu, made no secret of lamenting that his intellect was of an inferior and his disposition wantonly cruel and intractable. Amongst his earlier pranks two gave particular offence to his father. One was this. In taking his exercise on horse back, it was his particular delight to hunt the sacred bulls of the Hindu temples wounding them and sometimes destroying them with his lance.* Haidar was shocked at these wanton and unprofitable outrages on the feelings of the great mass of Hindus. Then, again, an English soldier who had been made a prisoner during Colonel Smith's war had remained in Mysore, on the liberation of his associates. Tipu, one day, took the opportunity of having him suddenly seized, and causing the outward and visible sign of Islam to be inflicted in

* After his own accession, it is said, he made no scruple of recommending the divine animal to his associates as the best beef.

his presence. Haidar was at the time particularly anxious to conciliate the English; he abused his son in the grossest terms, put him in solitary confinement, and when released, forbade his courtiers to speak with him; an interdiction which he frequently repeated as the consequence of subsequent offences. On this occasion as on many others he predicted that this unworthy successor would lose the Empire he had created. In order to indulge a silly prejudice he said he had insulted and injured the soldier in a manner which could answer no one rational purpose and might one day bring the vengeance of the English nation on his house.

Haidar however tried hard to reclaim his son. One method adopted by him was to get him to sign an agreement* formally drawn up for the purpose. The following made up its conditions :—

"1st. I will not do (any) one thing without the pleasure of your blessed Majes-

* Major-General Kirkpatrick's Tipoo's Letters. Col. Wilks dates this prior to 1771.

ty, Lord of Benefits; if I do, let me be punished, in whatever manner may seem fitting to your auspicious mind.—one article.

2nd. If in the affairs of the Sircar, I should commit theft, or be guilty of fraud, great or small, let me as the due punishment thereof be strangled.—one article.

3rd. If I be guilty of prevarication, or misrepresentation or of deceit, the due punishment thereof is this same strangulation.—one article.

4th. Without the orders of the Presence, I will not recieve from any one, Nuzzers,* &c., neither will I take things from any one (meaning perhaps forcibly): if I do, let my nose be cut off, and let me be driven out from the city.—one article.

5th. If, excepting on the affairs of the Sircar, I should hold conversation (probably cabal or intrigue) with any person or be guilty of any deceit &c., let me, in punishment thereof, be stretched on a cross.—one article.

* Benevolences.

6th. Whenever a country shall be committed to my charge by the Sircar, and an army be placed under my command, I will carry on all business regarding the same with the advice, and through the medium of such confidential persons as may be appointed (for the purpose) by the Sircar; and if I transact such affairs through any other channel than this, let me be strangled.—one article.

7th. If there should be any occasion for correspondence by writing, or to buy or give (away) any thing, or any letter should arrive from any place, I will do nothing (in such matters) without the concurrence and advice of the person appointed by the Sircar.—one article.

8th. I have written and delivered these few articles of my own free will, keeping the contents thereof in my heart's remembrance. I will act each article accordingly. If I forget this, and act in any other (or different) manner, let me be punished agreeably to the foregoing writing."

A story relates to the second of these articles. Tipu, it is said, never returned from a detachment, without attempting secret embezzlement of the plunder. Haidar on such occasions would lose all patience and in plain terms call him a thief, and a blockhead, observing that he had not the common sense to perceive that he was stealing from himself; "for unhappily," said he, "you will be my successor; would that I had beggoten Ayaz* instead of you."†

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* Ayaz was originally a Nayar taken captive at Chirakkal in Malabar and turned into a slave; he was subsequently Governor of Bednore. See Page 3.

† Wilks' Mysore. Vol. II.

VII

HAIDAR AND THE TIRUVANNAMALAI TEMPLE.

During the troubles that ensued on the descent of Haidar on the Karnatic in 1767, he passed through Tiruvannamalai, the great Saivite place of pilgrimage close to the rock fortress of Gingee in the present South Arcot district. Attracted by the great pagoda of Arunachalesvara at that place, he occupied it. Unusual though it was with him, he laid his cruel hands on the temple walls, and he rued for it the rest of his life-time.

Having made up his mind, he ordered his *Sibbandies* to pull down the immense enclosure walls surrounding the sacred temple. A workman took up his pick-axe and drove it hard on one of the lofty walls and Haidar standing by urged him and his comrades on to the task. All of a sudden

he felt a pinprick on his back and just turned round to see who it was. He saw a *Pandaram* with his flowing orange-tawny cloths flying rapidly away towards the temple entering which he disappeared for ever. People round about declared that it was Arunachalesvara himself who avenged the misdeed wrought by Haidar on his holy habitat.

Haidar took ill immediately and the prick on the back developed soon into a boil, which eventually proved to be a malignant type of carbuncle, commonly known as *Rajpod* amongst the people of this country. Many were the doctors that attended on him, hakims and Vydians by the score. The malady was a dangerous one and one of the remedies prescribed to overcome it, it is ghastly, to narrate-was the bandaging of human fœtus wrested from the wombs of pregnant women to it. This was as often applied as the carbuncle made its appe. arence. For a time all went well but after some years the disease made its reappear. ence. Haidar eventually died of its effects

on 7th December 1782. That was, say the Hindus, the price he paid for his desceration of the sacred edifice of Tiruvannamalai.

VIII

HAIDAR AND MUNRO.*

Munro, it is related, was once taken prisoner by the elder Sultan (Haidar), tied up to a post in the Seringapatam fort, given water and ration in a tin pan twice a day, and then marched out with others in heavy chains for the outdoor work of the day, which consisted in carrying basketfuls of mud on the head, apparently very much like our cooly gangs working on the Municipal roads. He minded not to ask for clemency of the Sultan, but once protested mildly to the Officer—One Anchè Thippiah by name,—of the pain he felt in the forehead, being unaccustomed to the unusually rough task alloted to him. But, said the officer promptly and cruelly, "It is the *hukkum* of the Circar and there is none so bold that can gainsay it and survive. There is but to obey and die." However Munro's cause was taken up by the trusted Treasury Officer of Haidar, who urged

* See Madras Review VIII (1902.)

with great force against the cruelty of the treatment meted out to Munro and his brother prisoners of war and of the utter uselessness of such means in curbing the power of the English nation. Events passed and Munro at last obtained his release and in the fullness of time attained to the position of Collector of the Ceded districts. He forgot not to reward the kind interceder in the hour of his trouble and difficulty. He instituted inquiries, but alas! to his bitter disappointment he was informed that he had died at the hands of the Younger Sultan (Tipu) and that his family had suffered persecutions and banishment. But dissatisfied Munro caused further enquiries to be made with the result that some of the unfortunate officer's descendants were found hiding themselves away in the jungles of the Baramahals. One of them—a brother's son—was given, after a careful traning in the lower ranks, a high place under him and was ultimately presented with a Jaghir in the Northern Circars. Nor did Munro forget the servant of Hai-

dar who exacted the stipulated work of the day from him at Seringapatam. When he went to Mysore after he became Governor of Madras, he enquired for him and on his being sent to him, Munro on seeing him slightly bent forward and pointing to his forehead said, " Well, Thippah, my forehead badly aches," and looked him almost immediately in the face. Unmoved the man stood up before him for a while, and then replied, " Most Excellent Sir, Haidar's was the Circar then and his orders were on thy servant's head. It is yours now and your words are commands to thy servant," and with that he joined his hands on his head. Munro was touched with the zeal of his late task-taker and warmly congratulated him on it.

IX

HAIDAR AND THE MOGHUL EMPEROR.

Once upon a time a number of lads were grazing cattle near the village pond. It was about midday when they had taken their repast and sitting together were chatting away. A Mahomedan youth turned up, worn out by fatigue and hunger. He begged of the boys for some food. They gladly gave what remained. Having partaken of food, he borrowed a blanket from one of them and lay down to rest underneath a tree with his head resting on an ant-hill. The sun, after some time, shone brightly upon him. A snake came out of the ant-hill and playing upon his head, completely protected him from the piercing rays of the sun. The sun went down and the snake disappeared. This was espied from at a distance by a Brahman lad of 12 years of age. Shrewd as he was, he walked up to the Mahomedan youth and inquired

of him his name and other things. The boy said: "My parents died in my childhood. I have been a foundling and I know not if any name was given me." "Well,' thought the Brahman boy "this young man is sure to attain to eminence." He then announced to him that he would live to see better days and rise to great office. He then asked him to remember him and as a remembrance gave his golden ring which he asked to try on one of his fingers. Putting on the ring, which fitted exactly, he said he may get into trouble with the villagers if he took it from him and so he said he would be glad if he would take it back from him. The Brahman lad however reassured him and gave the ring back to him. He put it on and in due time reached Delhi. There the Emperor had an aged minister who had an only son. He had just died bitten by a cobra. The minister espied this boy in the crowd that had assembled near the body and mistaking him for his own dead son—so close was the resemblance between the two—he took him home and adopted

him as his son. After some time he retired from his post and with the Emperor's permission, got his son appointed to the place. The Emperor bestowed the title of "Bahadur" upon him and gave him the southern country to rule over. Remembering his old friend, the Brahman boy, he sent for him and loaded him with presents and conferred on him the province of Satara to rule over. He afterwards became well known as "Srimant".

XX

HAIDAR AND THE ASTROLOGER.*

The sun had just set and the short eastern twilight was fleeting fast. A moment the dusk had turned to utter drakness, and the blazing light in the public offices opposite became more clearly visible, though obscured now and again by an ever-moving croud round it. Beside the Indian lamp was the gaunt figure of an old lanky man with wrinkled cheeks and sunken eyes peering into men's hands, legs and tongues in quick succession and dismissing them with equal alacrity. The flickering light would be mended frequently by the eager by standers, and the lamp was fed by a generous supply of 'public'oil by the *masalchi*. The whole government establishment from the Dewan to the *duffadar* was busy. Everyone was eager in pushing forth his hand over the heads and backs of his neighbours to get at the astrologer for a peep

* See Madras Review XI (1905.)

into his future. To the observant Haidar on the opposite terrace all was plain in a second and the thought apparently flashed on him 'why not he try his luck?' Straightway he ran down the stairs, put on a *kumbli* (camblet) on his shoulders and with a long rustic stick in his right-hand set out to the spot which had so long attracted him. Unobserved by any and unsuspected by all, from behind everyone he stretched forth his open palm to the astrologer. "Keep back," quoth the indignant fortune-teller after a moment's examination, "keep back, thou wretch! This is the hand," continued he lifting up his head to the crowd "of a corpse-bearer." Unperturbed, Haidar quickly withdrew his hand and unseen he slipped off to his abode. That was a memorable night. The future fortunes and miseries of many had been foretold in a few curt words, which were not altogether devoid of ambiguity. And the astrologer had been promised an early introduction to the Big Sultan.

The morrow dawned, not too soon to

the anxions astrologer. The courtiers and officers had early repaired to the audience call of their master and there eagerly awaited his arrival. Haidar entered at the usual hour but with a contorted face, delared in low faltering tones that he had fever on him since last evening and that he was suffering from pain all over the body and did not quite feel sure of his fate. An opportunity had unexpectedly offered itself and the prime public functionary promptly stood up and observed, "O, Khodadad! Inscrutable are the ways of the all merciful Providence. Thou art not sure of thy fate and there is the new-come seer that tells men's fortunes with wonderfull celerity. All the people have fled to him and have returned with gleeful hearts. Everywhere is he seen but nowhere is he found—such is the demand for him. If he be summoned we cannot be long in suspense. May it please my Khodadad." Haidar's object was gained and he nodded assent. The feigned fever had left him and he was impatient to test the honesty of this reputed reader of the Book of Fates.

The arrival of this worthy was are long announced and in due time he began his business, amidst solemn silence, by extending his hand for the adventurer's palm. Haidar stretched it forth and waited. "Ah!" exclaimedthe astonished old man, "this is a seen hand,—the hand of a corpse bearer." "Thou art only saved from the gallows to be thrown into the prison," quickly followed up the usurper, "thy tricks and thy rogueries shall end this day." The astrologer gasped for breath, gaped and stared and was motionless; the audience was taken aback, and nothing relieved for a while the painful stillness of the scene but the loud thundering accents of Haidar who cried out, "speak crafty villain and be saved. Explain thyself and beware you speak the truth." Hardly had Haidar resumed his seat than the whïlom terrified astrologer stood forth on his defence and said: "what can come from the sea but the moon; what can come from the mountain but the life-giving herb; what can come from beneath Mother Earth but the all

nourishing seed, and what can come from my ever victorious Khodadad but the ancient Wisdom of his fathers. Truly, the wise shall be rewarded and the wicked shall be punished. Allow thy humble servant some bee's wax and he shall soon demonstrate to a finality the truth of the science of his revered forefathers." He pasted the wax in circular patches all over the body of Haidar and took them out one by one and carefully examined them. Those that had been pasted to the walls of the mouth showed clear imprints of the *chank* and *chakar*, the Vishnavite regal emblems. "Here are those," frantically cried out the recovered astrologer, "that made my Khodadad what he is, the Ruler of fair Mysore." The old man was richly rewarded with shawls and money and dismissed with honour.

XXI
HAIDAR AND THE ENGLISH.

About the year 1782, the position of Haidar was truly critical. He had been defeated at every point by Sir Eyre Coote, the great English Commander-in-Chief, and a treaty concluded by Warren Hastings, then Governor-General of India, with Nizam Ali, the Peshwa and Madoji Scindia completely isolated him. While thus dispirited, he was, either by accident or design left entirely alone with his minister Poorniah. After being for some time apparently immersed in deep thought, he addressed himself to Poorniah in the following words:—

"I have committed a great error, I have purchased a draught of *sendi* (spirits) at the price of a lakh of pagodas : I shall pay dearly for my arrogance ; between me and the English there were perhaps mutual grounds of dissatisfaction, b[illegible]
-fficient cause for war, and I might have

made them my friends in spite of Mahammed Ali, the most treacherous of men.* The defeat of many Baillies and Braith Waites will not destroy them. I can ruin their resources by land, but I cannot dry up the sea; and I must be the first to weary of a war in which I can gain nothing by fighting."†

* The then Nawab of the Karnatic.
† 'Wilks' History of Mysore (Madras Editor) II.9 10.

XXII

HAIDAR AND RAIJI.

Raiji, an intelligent and able Brahman, was Governor of Arcot when Haidar invaded the Karnatic in 1781. Sure of its investment by Haidar, Raiji had put the fortress of Arcot in an excellent posture of defence. Haidar appeared before it on 19th September and began his attack of the place. Raiji offered a brave defence for over 6 weeks and when he found that it was of no avail determined to capitulate. Sending out a messenger to Haidar he entered his private apartment and there sat down to perform his daily round of austerities. Haidar, forcing himself into the fort, enquired for Raiji and was told that he was engaged in his poojas. "Well," said he, "disturb not him. When he is risen, tell him that the Bahadur of Mysore had waited on him." Raiji then sought an audince of Haidar, which was readily granted him. Struck with his brave defence and his great administrative capa-

city, Haidar enquired if he would enter his service. " Having eaten, said Raiji, " Mahammad Ali's salt, can I prosper if I proved ungrateful to him. What regard would you yourself have for a man who thus changed his masters ?" Haidar, astute and politic as he was, thoroughly appreciated the reply and at once gave up the subject. He marked his good opinion of Raiji, by the considerate treatment he meted out to him and his men, quite unlike the brutality he usually exhibited against prisoners of war

XXIII

HAIDAR AND BEDNORE.

On the conquest of Bednore in 1763, Haidar set about forming an administration for it. Throughout the arrangements he made for it, he treated it as a separate Kingdom, for he ever kept up the pretence that the Mysore Kingdom belonged to the Hindu Raja of the old line. A few days after its capture, a person remarked to Haidar that the Rani of Bednore, made a captive after the war, had intended to augment the houses of the capital town to ninety thousand, the distructive number which in former days constituted a *Nagar*. "We will not mar object," said Haidar, "and it shall be named Haidar Nagar.*"

* Wilks' History of Mysore I—279.

XXIV

HAIDAR AND MASTER LANG

Amongst the prisoners taken by Haidar after the destruction of Baillie's forces at Perambakam, in 1780, was Master Lang, a son of Colonel (afterwards Major-General) Lang, who commanded Vellore. He was a child rather than a youth, born in India, and serving as a volunteer in Baillie's detachment. Haidar sent for the boy, and ordered him instantly to write a letter to his father, offering him a splended establishment, on the condition of surrendering the place, and announcing that his own death would be the result of refusal. The boy at first received the proposition with a cool rejection; but on being pressed with direct threats, he burst into tears, and addressing Haidar in his own language, said: "If you consider *me* base enough to write such a letter; on what ground can you think so meanly

of *my father!* It is in your power to pre-sent me before the ramparts of Vellore, and cut me into a thousand pieces in my father's presence; but it is out of your power to make him a traitor."

The threats were renewed by the at-tendants in a separate tent but all to no purpose. Struck with his courageous at-titude, Haidar remanded the boy to the quarters of the other prisoners*.

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* Wilks' History of Mysore I.—460.

United Printing Works, Madras.